

SIX

J. A. C. A.

PLATE MADE

From a drawing of nearly Thirteen
Years in that Island.

By W. B. R. FORD, junr.

FORMERLY OF THE ARMY IN EUROPE, AND LATE
OF THE ARMY IN JAMAICA.

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MDCCLXXXVIII.

W. PARSONS, Esq;

*Master and Conductor of the
King's Band of Music.*

JUNE 22d, 1788.

DEAR PARSONS!

MY present situation
might have reduced me to the pain-
ful necessity of trying your heart;
but you have generously anticipated
what distress might have extorted,
and have considered yourself obliged
not only by conferring, but accumu-
lating obligations. When men like
you attain to the height of their

profession, arrest the applause of the scientific, and command the service of the great, not only envy will be silent, but justice approve.

As this address comes forward without your knowledge or consent, I am not sure that it will escape your censure ; but I would rather hazard *your* displeasure, than not confess *my* gratitude.

I am,

Your very sincere Friend,

W. BECKFORD.

PRE-

P R E F A C E.

THE following remarks were written at the desire of some respectable friends, who were pleased to think, that a residence of nearly thirteen years in Jamaica might supply the place of abilities, and the subject be an excuse for the presumption ; and although they were only meant for a private eye, yet I do not now scruple to say, that they are published upon another account : the place in which I am, the situation to which reduced, must therefore be my apology to the candid, and my justification to the humane.

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I am aware that many repetitions will be found in the course of the following observations ; but for those, and the errors that will occur, I must solicit the indulgence of my readers (should I be favoured with any) who will generously make allowances, I hope, for the want of those strictures and corrections of friendship, of which my present confinement has unfortunately deprived me.

What I have suggested has been in consequence of local experience ; I have not wished to mislead, nor to cast illiberal or personal reflections : if any shall occur that may seem to bear this imputation, they have arisen without premeditation from the general subject, and were not intended to wound the feelings, nor to apply to the private conduct of any individual.

dual. The knowledge I have gained in this place of the miseries of others, may have excited my feelings; but where I behold so many of a deeper complection than my own, it would be weakness to despond, and injustice to complain.

As I have not read any pamphlet whatever that treats of the present subject, I am not conscious of having adopted the ideas of others; * and although

* I am happy to find that the same idea that struck me in respect to the number of slaves confined in one ship, has likewise arisen in other minds, and is likely to undergo a reformation; and it cannot be doubted but justice will attend benevolence, and that it will not suffer private rights to be infringed by public and popular opinion: it ought likewise to be observed, that this reform can only affect the African, and does not by any means apply to the comforts of the American slaves; so far, therefore, it will only be a partial introduction of that humanity, which, I humbly conceive, was meant to be extended to both.

Although many of the remarks in the following pages
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although these remarks were dictated so long ago as the month of February; yet a variety of causes has hitherto prevented their publication. I now submit them, with diffidence, to the public opinion, in the hope that those who interest themselves in the cause of humanity, will not censure the intention, on account of the weakness of the execution.

may seem particularly applicable to a pen (or a farm upon which the sugar cane is not planted) they may still refer to any mountain or part of an estate upon which the new negroes may be at first settled, and from which drawn off, and become domesticated with the slaves of the same plantation.

FLEET,

June 22d, 1788.

S I R,

S I R,

YOU have sacrificed your judgment to your friendship, in supposing me capable of making any pertinent remarks upon the situation of African and Creole slaves.—I shall however obey your commands, and confine my observations to such particulars as have fallen within the reach of my own experience.

A residence of many years in Jamaica, during which period I had the direction of a considerable number of negroes, and a portion of them my own, is the principal ground upon which I mean to build my observations; and as for that period I was very attentive, not only from interest, but pleasure, to their labour, their accommodation, and their wants,

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I may be supposed to have gained some little knowledge; though, I fear, not sufficient to give my arguments that force, which better talents and more industry would have a right to claim.

I shall not expose my ignorance by attempting to describe the situation of these unhappy people, (who are now become the objects of public, or private compassion) when living in either a state of ease or warfare in their own country; nor dwell upon the methods used to decoy or force them from thence; upon the hardships they encounter during the voyage; their want of food or exercise; the cruelties inflicted upon them, nor their treatment in the harbour, until the day of sale; as these I have only obtained from oral information, and cannot therefore insist upon as an honest evidence. What I myself have seen, I may with candour advance; and I shall think myself fortunate, if any remarks I may be able to make upon this melancholy subject may tend to open the eyes of the planter, and help to convince him, that, in the relative situation of master and slave, humanity is the foundation of interest,

interest, and the advocates of the present cause, that political and national advantage will be the consequence of a system directed to the alleviation of their general sufferings; if it can be done without infringing upon the rights of individuals. Whatever effect the petitions may have upon this trade, so repugnant to our religion, and to those ideas of liberty under which we live; they will, however deserve to be attended with the blessings of those who feel, should they be the means of restraining the rigour of a cruel master, and tend to a mitigation of the bodily and mental sufferings; and add in future to the comforts of the unhappy slave: and these appear to me, the only good effects that can possibly result from the success of the applications.

While now the flame of humanity seems to glow in every breast, it should not be suffered to cool; for the spark once neglected will die away, and receive, perhaps, a blaze no more; but the subject must be touched with a delicate hand, considered in all possible points of view, lest inhumanity should be the consequence of pity, the end of the

petitions be thereby defeated, the intended remedy fail, and the wounds of the negroes left incapable of a cure. The comforts that must attend their future situation should originate in England, extend to Africa, and be matured in the colonies; and what these requisitions are, I shall endeavour to explain.

The first object that strikes me is, the necessity of making a previous arrangement for their reception on board; no confinement under the hatches, nor chains should be allowed; no indecent liberties taken by the crew; no promiscuous intercourse between men and women; no families (if such be found) should be separated, no harmless recreations in the day denied; nor warm clothes refused at night; and especial care should be observed, that too many be not confined in one ship.* If a reform be intended to be made,

* If it be possible to make any indulgent regulations upon this head, those regulations will more effectually serve the cause of humanity, than any idea that can affect the present comfort, or substantiate the future confidence of an African slave. If no more negroes be put on board one ship, than a ship of the same burthen, as a transport, will accommodate of sailors and troops, I do not see any reason why compassion should be alarmed,

made, for the relief of human creatures, why not begin at the fountain head, and trace the stream of misery through all its channels, where open, confine, or divert it; and where not obvious, let a search be made; nor forego the enquiry, until something efficient shall be done, or the project be resigned in despair.

Suppose a cargo should consist (as many do) of six hundred slaves, and one half of them should perish from neglect, or from a want of the common necessaries of life; and the remainder be reduced by inanition to skin and bones; what advantage can this large cargo boast, thus conditioned, over one of half that number, out of which the loss has been small, and the passengers healthy? That many of these indignant people have risen in rebellion, for a recovery of that liberty, which no trea-

alarmed, if an African do not receive more indulgence than what an European is entitled to: but if fetters must be used in consideration of an encrease of numbers; I could wish their numbers to be reduced, that the terrors of slavery might not be anticipated, and that the poor deluded sufferers might not find a tyrant, where they were taught to expect a friend. Of the commercial profits or disadvantages upon this subject, I am not competent to speak, and therefore my suggestion is only a private idea, which those who are more intelligent may easily confute and over-rule.

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chery has a right to deprive them of, may be surely forgiven by the independent, and pardoned by the just: that many have perished on the voyage for want, and that many have been thrown over board, or left to starve upon islands, inaccessible to relief, or pity, has been too generally credited to remain a doubt, If these instances of cruelty have happened, the utmost efforts of human prudence should be exerted, that they may not occur again.

When these unhappy creatures arrive at their destined port, particular care is taken to make their skins have a glossy appearance (this being a strong indication of health) to have their heads shaved, wholly or fantastically, to have their joints oiled, and to make them practise sudden rising, leaping, or any action that will give vigour to their limbs. If the cargo be much reduced they are often kept back to recruit (for negroes will thrive in indolence, and gain flesh, as is obvious, under inoculation:*) If plump and healthy
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* It is notorious that negroes however low in flesh will recruit in idleness, I do not conceive an additional quantity of
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they are shewn a few days after their arrival, and until the day of sale. It is a sight, not less indelicate than shocking, to see these poor wretches, these outcasts of humanity when first exposed ! indelicate as men, women, and children almost appear in a state of nature ; and shocking as the sight of fellow creatures thus degraded, must harrow up the soul of every man who is not entirely dead to sensibility. If their appearance strike us with a something at which the mind revolts, what must their ideas be at the commencement of a sale ? what must they think of their precarious existence, when crowds burst at once upon, and surround them ; and by a hasty and indiscriminate choice awaken their fears for the present, and confirm their apprehensions of the miseries to come ? Upon this occasion of trial and uncertainty, many have plunged themselves at once into the sea, more willing to second the anticipations

of food to be of so much real service to them when sick, as a prudent indulgence of rest ; for under inoculation, when the first is partially allowed, I have known them fatten in proportion to the extension of the last, and of this I can speak with confidence, having been a frequent witness of the fact.

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of despair, than survive the apprehensions of an impending fate.

I would here, with deference, propose, that the sales be in future private; that few be exposed to purchase in a lot, that families and connections be particularly attended to, and sold to the same master, or if that cannot be, as near as possible to the same neighbourhood.* Such tenderness would be a present consolation to the dejected slaves, give a pleasing confidence in the justice and humanity of the master, reconcile them to their labour for his interest, and prove a source to the purchaser of future emolument. I am convinced that many of these neglected creatures have given themselves up to sorrow and despair, for no other reason than a separation from their old attachments; and what makes me more inclinable to this belief is, the constant predilection they have upon all

* That private sales will better answer the purport of profit and humanity, I have not a doubt, for the same or more eagerness will attend the purchase of a lot of five, than will be observed in one of fifty: relations and attachments may be thence considered; and he who cannot realize two families (if families be set apart) may be at least able, in conjunction with a neighbour, to purchase one.

occasions,

occasions, to those who have been purchased from the same cargo, and whom they emphatically distinguish by the appellation of ship-mates. A person of the same country to speak the language, explain the nature of their expected service, and how they are to act to avoid punishment, and extort indulgence, should constantly attend these private sales, (for public ones I have already reprobated, and given my reasons) that they may not enter with distrust into their new condition; and this idea seems to be no less founded upon justice than policy.

I could wish that every Guinea factor, every planter, every purchaser of a slave, would seriously reflect upon his natural situation, and that he would not assume consequence from power, nor oppression from the means of distress: that every man who willingly, or is obliged through necessity to become an exile from his paternal soil, and who foregoes the constitutional birth-right of freedom, to sink into a purchased slave * would only

* To what this alludes, is too obvious to require an explanation.

reflect one moment upon what he was, and accordingly use with moderation that power, which neither mental abilities, nor acknowledged virtues, but a change of climate and a series of fortune have put into his hands.

I suppose a parcel of negroes to be now purchased,—what would be the general idea of extorted slavery? a secret sigh, a fullen murmur, or a deep revenge! How contrary to such suggestions is the real fact? One, two, or three strangers at most of their own colour, will lead from forty to fifty newly purchased from one end of the Island to the other; they will dance and sing throughout the journey, without lamenting a change of life, dissimilarity of manners, or fatigue of distance; but will chearfully follow wherever they are conducted, and refresh themselves whenever they halt, without resentment, without suspicion, without concern: nay if one of their shipmates, from apparent weakness of constitution, or any accidental disease of body or mind be left unpurchased, he will follow his departing companions with a heavy eye: and would sooner pine away with sorrow at his rejection, than dread the
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most inhuman situation to which his own fears, or the apprehensions of his countrymen might reduce him.

If the negroes were particularly addicted to revenge, they would have frequent and secret opportunities of gratifying, with all its horrors, this implacable and infernal passion. I think them more inclinable to forgive than resent an injury, they will quarrel indeed most violently with their tongues, but seldom with their hands, and there cannot be much to dread from their general indolence and timidity. The Coromantee negroes are, it must be confessed, of a more savage appearance and intrepid temper; but as they are seldom brought so young to the country as those of other nations, and indignant at the idea of labour soon pine in fullness, or sink their spirits in their pride, I would not depend too much upon *their* exertions, nor flatter myself with a continuity of *their* strength. Nowwithstanding the great predilection for this people I have seldom known them answer upon an estate;—on the contrary—I have been more unlucky myself in the purchase of these slaves than in

those of any other country—they may do very well for jobbers, and for those who require immediate work; but as they are not equally docile with those of other nations, do not easily domesticate, and form attachments, or work with pleasure and perseverance in their grounds, I would not recommend any number of them at a time to be fixed upon the same estate.

I now suppose the African to be arrived upon the spot, where his labours are to be exerted, and the remainder of his life confined. His content (for I will not think him capable of happiness, for who is, or can be so?) must eventually depend upon a variety of circumstances—upon the effect that his person may make upon the purchaser, upon his obedience to the overseer, upon the structure of his body, the openness of his face, the vigour of his limbs, and upon his apparent sense and ductability; but more than all, upon the connections he may form, and the protection he may find among negroes of consequence and power upon the plantation.

A negro

A negro man is purchased either for a trade, or the cultivation and different process of the cane—the occupations of the women are only two, the house, with its several departments, and supposed indulgencies, or the field with its exaggerated labours. The first situation is the most honorable, the last the most independant; for I never knew a negro who would not willingly forego the comforts of the house (which service requires a constant attendance) to be sure of the hours of accustomed leisure; and what that leisure is, I shall endeavour in the course of these observations to explain.

It appears to me that too many slaves are brought to the Islands advanced in life; whereas, if only those who are young, or at the most under twenty years of age were imported, there would not be much risk of their having left behind them those regrets, which those may be supposed to have done, who have been forced from the endearing ties of wife and children, and under the painful anticipations of their future wretchedness and want. Those who are at the period above described, consider their entrance into a new
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state of life, as a temporary pastime, which must be greatly enhanced by the sudden enjoyment of ideal liberty, after the horrible confinement of a long, and perhaps a tempestuous, and dangerous voyage. They take the hoe, the adze, the hammer, or the plane the first time into their hands with as much youthful vanity as a boy at school does his bat; and it is not long before they know how to make an ingenious use of either.

- From the age of twelve to sixteen is, in my opinion, the period that is most likely to answer the future views of the purchaser; for as property in the West-Indies is only valuable according to its capital, (as the land would be of little use without negroes or cattle to work it) it is surely the interest of the proprietor (humanity out of the question) to preserve it undiminished; and if it can be supported without a recruit of foreign purchase, (an instance of which has not fallen within my experience, or that of any person with whom I am acquainted) it argues either prevention, care, or some accidental properties of soil and climate.

I think it bad policy to push the labours of
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the negro to the utmost, and I have never known those plantations prosper, the masters of which have been bent upon immediate gain. Even strength may be wrought down to weakness, the stoutest cattle become disabled, and the best land be so much cultured as to make it poor: it is therefore better to forego a present, or accidental profit, (for if hurricanes continue, the additional strength of an hundred negroes would not encrease the crop in any proportion to the expence) than to push forward to an uncertainty, and a blind dependance upon those seasons which have for some years past so woefully deceived. It must be confessed that more manual exertion is necessary upon some properties than upon others; for, wherever an estate requires a large portion of land, with a small proportion of strength, to be annually planted, the labour must be greatly more than on that which with the same number of hands, does not require so many acres to be steadily put in. An estate making two hundred hogheads of sugar, and preserving its capital, will be worth more at the end of thirty years than one making three, that is obliged to depend upon frequent recruits.

cruits. It is not the quantity of produce that is annually made, but the moderate rate at which it is manufactured, that among planters stamps the independent and affluent man.

Exclusive of the first cost of a slave, the risk that is run in seasoning more than one out of two, is sufficient one would think to discourage a prudent man from the purchase of slaves; but as few planters, I am afraid, are considered in this light, and as those in particular who reside in the country are extremely sanguine in their pursuits, and will buy so long as they have either money or credit to support their ideas; it is not a matter of wonder that the sales are so frequent, so advantageous to the merchant, but so destructive in general to him who buys.

I am sorry to be obliged to say, when treating of the fatal complaints of the negroes, that humanity is sometimes totally forgotten; and that these poor, disabled creatures, whose colour and situation should excite compassion, are often left in the state of painful helplessness above described, to linger out their days, unseen, unpitied, unprovided. Some law
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should be made, and rigorously enforced to prevent this flagrant enormity; as well as to give protection and support to those who from age and infirmity are no longer able to work, and who should not be left at this period of declining mortality to the caprice and insult of an overseer. The same provision should extend to the sickly and disabled in all periods and conditions of life. I must here likewise take notice of an abuse, as general as it is erroneous, and as inefficient as it is inhuman. When a negro becomes an invalid from age, accident, or any natural or acquired infirmity, he is put to those situations of exertion and trust, which even the most young and robust, the most healthy and confidential are not always equal to the execution of. He is sent into the mountains to watch provisions, to prevent the theft of plantation, or other negroes, and to repel the trespasses of cattle, either there, or among the canes; and as few of the pieces are enclosed, many planted with corn, and the cattle, men, and boys very rarely attentive, much is expected from his vigilance, and more from those exertions, which, in fact, from bodily

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infirmity, he is not able to make; for how can he be expected to run, who with difficulty can barely walk? The frequent consequence of his inability is a revenge upon the intruding cattle; for as he cannot stir to drive them away, he throws a stone to knock out an eye, or a lance to pierce them to the heart.

As many negroes of this description watch the pens, in which the cattle are nightly enclosed, when manuring the land for future cultivation, much, too much I think, is expected from their watchfulness, perseverance, and care; nor are they sufficiently relieved or supported in this painful and uncertain trust. If by chance, after having toiled all day long to make the pens secure, and if after his bodily exertions, he drop to sleep, or pinched by the descending dews, or chilly winds (which often blow with an intenseness that would even make the most hardy European shudder) he retire to his hut for warmth, or to prepare his food; and if, in this temporary absence, nay, although he should be intent upon his watch, a refractory mule, or an obstinate steer should break
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the enclosure, and only trample upon a young, or break a ripened, cane; the poor wretch conceives his crime to be so enormous, that if he cannot depend upon the justice, or humanity of the overseer (to which but few will make appeal) he immediately absconds, a trusty negro is dispatched in search, he is brought home, and punished for a double crime; for that of neglect, and that of absence; although the utmost strength and circumspection might not have been able to prevent the first. If a sentinel be only expected to give a vigilant watch for two hours, without any previous fatigue of body or mind; why should a worn-out negro, unable in his person, and sunk by toil, be expected to be responsible for a watch of twelve? I could here describe the poor negro with patient trembling, and wishful thought, lament the want of raiment, food, and shelter: but as his feelings are supposed to be different from ours; his body impassive to the same intrusions, and his mind not affected by the same cares; I shall avoid a painting that might be thought more florid than just; and con-

tent myself with tracing a representation of his sufferings in my own mind.

I shall now take up the imported slave from his first introduction to labour, and mark his progress in health and sickness, under a mild, or cruel master, and in a warm, or chilly climate; for inconsiderable as is the extent of latitude between one part of the island of Jamaica and another; yet the seasons vary, almost as much as between spring and summer, and autumn and winter in other regions.

Every man who purchases a negro, should lay it down as a general position that he cannot bear the cold; his hut should therefore be erected in a situation, impervious to the breeze at night, and under a local protection from the norths at noon, at the setting in of which (as they blow with uncommon keenness) most Europeans who have been long settled in the country, have annual visitations of the fever; and the chilly negroes, attacked by pleurishes, very sensibly feel, and painfully suffer, from this alteration of the climate.

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There seem to be but two plans adopted for the seasoning of African negroes, and neither of which can I, from experience, approve. I only wish to broach, not insist upon, my ideas; and I shall cheerfully bestow my humble mite of thanks and gratitude, to those who may successfully labour, and triumph at last in the cause of humanity.

A slave, so far as his degraded situation will allow, should be made easy, confident, and independent. A property should be given to him, as soon as may be, in a house, in live stock, or a ground. Let time be given to him upon his arrival for pleasure, and encourage him to look forward without concern, to his future work. Let him be taught to build a hovel for himself; and for this purpose let a man, who speaks his native language, assist him in felling the wood; let the cattle belonging to the estate draw it home; and let him make a pleasure, not a duty, of his building. Let the same indulgence be allowed him, respecting his ground, let him work it for himself; let it be particularly guarded, and every intrusion upon it for the purpose of theft, if discovered, be

be severely punished. If he be led into idleness, or neglect, or be taught to thieve by other negroes, (for example is contagious) let the seducer, and not the deluded, encounter chastisement, in which the intent and not trespass should be considered; for if a negro be not able to provide himself with food, and there be plenty, unappropriated, upon the plantation, (of which I have known some, I may say many instances) it cannot be deemed criminal in him to take for self-preservation, what an inhuman overseer might deny from humanity.

A new negro should not be threatened with the whip, nor brought where punishments are inflicted: as many are reduced, from the chances of war, from independency to servitude, they will often feel their reverse of condition with resentment; or will brood over in silence, those miseries, which, as they cannot elude, they may treasure up in their minds to be matured by future events.*

* The desperation of a negro is more frequently turned upon himself, than upon him by whom he has been made desperate.

Some indeed will dare the terrors of the boiling cauldron, some attach themselves to trees and doors, some plunge into the rapid torrent, and some will end their desperate existence with a knife. The Eboe negroes are particularly addicted to suicide, and a very trifling anticipation of misery will make them rush, almost by families, at once into eternity. Great tenderness should therefore be shewn to slaves of this description;—they should be bought young; and in the choice of women, from whatever country they might come, I would select those (although they be not thought to be the most valuable) who seem to be in a fair way to become mothers. The immediate indulgence which that situation requires, and the time allowed after the period of delivery will be the means of preparing them by degrees to their expected labour; they will instantly make acquaintances, or form connections with those who have been before purchased from their own country, and it will reconcile them by a gentle progress to the discipline, manners, and climate: but the principal advantage to the master will be the

the pledge newly given to his property of the attachment of the parent to that spot upon which her child is born. I think that negroes in general are tender of their children, particularly of those who are in a state of helplessness; and if they were encouraged as nurses, I am apt to believe that so many would not be lost within so short a period as nine days after their birth. I am aware that there are many planters who do not wish their women to breed, * as there-

* A negro woman has very little encouragement in general, if she become the mother, to be the support of a numerous offspring, and yet it is astonishing to see, how large a family she will raise upon a plantation without any expence to the master, or seeming distress to herself. It is natural, it may be said, for a parent to provide for its progeny; but nature does not always furnish subsistence, especially in latitudes where the concussions of the elements will not only render abortive industry, but wealth. The proprietor who wishes to encourage population, should assist with tenderness those means which from frequent demands begin to fail, should indulge the mother with time appointed to the number of her claims, and should allow, not only leisure to herself, but attendants to her children; for the more moderate the work of a young and healthy negro is, the longer will it endure, and the more likely will she be to continue to raise supplies for the plantation. To the absolute liberation of a slave who shall have brought

by so much work is lost in their attendance upon their infants: but a man who looks forward should consider that these young shoots, when become saplings, will be fit for a variety of uses, and when grown up will be the future supports of the plantation. Those properties that do not raise, must be obliged to purchase strength; and to those of this way of thinking I can only oppose my opinion, while they are left the free indulgence of theirs. I should imagine that there are few planters who would not rejoice at the sight of a long list of negro children, as it must reflect some credit upon their humanity, that of the overseer, and upon the value of their negroes; for I have always observed those to be the most steady, the most quiet, the most obedient, and *their* labour the most to be depended upon,

brought up a given number of children upon an estate, I must for the sake of humanity object; for when she shall become unable to work for her family, she will be unable to work for herself, and therefore will stand in need of double support. She may be made independant as to labour, but should be always dependant upon her master for protection and food,

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who had these tender and pleasing ties to bind them to the property.*

A planter who wishes to look forward to future independency, should not be too sanguine in his purchases, under the idea of pushing his property to decrease his debt: he should consider, that, for what he buys, notwithstanding the temptations of a long credit, he must be at last obliged to pay; he should consider besides that interest is a perpetual motion, and that even with the best prospects, hurricanes may sweep away, the blast destroy, or drought burn up his canes. Expence is certain, but the fruits of that expence precarious: and I rather think that estate will be the soonest clear of debt (for I consider almost all in the West-Indies to be so, particularly since the late calamitous visitations of heaven) which proceeds with a mild and steady operation of its strength and means, the proprietor of which is more

* I am of opinion that the average of negro children raised upon a plantation will be worth more seven years after their birth, than the same number of African slaves seven years after their purchase. A creole of twelve years old I consider of more value to the plantation upon which he is born, than the pick of two out of a ship would ultimately turn out to be.

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anxious to do justice to his creditors by an annual, although a slow decrease of his encumbrance, than by augmenting his loan under the idea of pushing his crops, and of thereby weakening those powers, which at the last must fail.

The two methods generally adopted for the seasoning of negroes (and both of which I have repeatedly tried, and in both of which I have failed) are the following: either to quarter them upon old ones, under whom they are to learn to make a ground; or to have one ready planted, full of provisions, and apportioned to them upon their arrival: of both these plans I highly disapprove, and for the ensuing reasons. If a new negro attend an old one to the mountain, (as it is the undeviating principle of the colour not to do that for themselves which others will do for them) it is ten to one but he make the stranger do the drudgery, while he claims, in consideration of the use of his hut, and the pitiful subsistence he may give him, the undisputed possession of all the produce—nay more, he will make him his slave upon all occasions, and if he express by fullness the

least disinclination to do that which he is imperiously ordered to perform, threats at least, if not a blow, will be the immediate consequence. If he complain to the *overseer*, *he* may not be inclined to listen, the consequence will be a discouragement to future applications, and a more dependent situation under the tyrant than he experienced before. In short so soon as he begins to be handy, to understand a few words of the language, and has learned to please the culinary taste of his master, he is kept awake for this purpose, sent upon messages, and goes through the meanest service of dependency: so that in fact the new negro has not only his overseer to obey, but his tyrant to please; and under this double humiliation this part of slavery at least may be easily conceived. The other mode of seasoning is to give them grounds, and work them all together in one gang on Sunday to clean or plant it; and as this is done under the eye of a driver, it is only accumulating the seventh day of labour, instead of giving the one of rest. As negroes of every other description have this day to themselves all the year round, and out of crop every other

Saturday,

Saturday, one would naturally think, from policy, as well as humanity, that the new negroes ought to be more than entitled to this indulgence. It must surely be attended with mortification to them to behold their fellow-labourers in the same plantations ranging over the face of the mountains to chuse a spot for present cultivation, or to abandon that at pleasure, to select another that his inclination may prefer; while they are obliged to work under the hoe, and feel not that day of independency which the others enjoy. But this is not all—a portion of ground with bearing provisions is given to them, from which they are expected to subsist, before they are become sufficiently acquainted with its nature to ascertain either its use or value: The consequence is, in the end, defeated; what si ready for the pot they indiscriminately gather; and heedless of the morrow, consume, or destroy in one day, what was expected, with labour and foresight, to last a year; and so soon as they shall have gleaned it to the last bunch of plantains, or the ultimate root, (which it would be a miracle if the thieves have spared) they then neglect its further

further cultivation, and throw themselves
 back upon the indulgence of the master, who
 refers them to the overseer, and the overseer
 perhaps to punishment. There is no doubt
 that many negroes, even upon properties that
 are abundant in provisions, absolutely die,
 or contract incurable complaints from a want
 of food; and here it is in vain for the doctor
 to prescribe; for his skill cannot, although
 his remonstrances might, if attended to, have
 helped to avert the horrors of want. I am
 sorry to observe, that much reform is want-
 ing, where one should hope that fellow-feel-
 ing would rather anticipate, than wait for the
 slow progress of those complaints, which can-
 not fail to bring the unhappy sufferer to an
 early grave. It is melancholy to see the
 more than brutal insensibility with which the
 patient negroes are often times in sickness
 treated—it is more inexcusable, as their
 silence and resignation under, and the forti-
 tude with which they bear the most excru-
 ciating bodily sufferings, and professional pain,
 would pass among divines for a christian
 obedience to what they feel; and among
 zealots entitle them to the appellation of
 martyrs

martyrs in despair. The truth is, the poor negroes are seldom considered as human creatures, and are consequently as rarely treated as such.

The plan I would humbly submit for the seasoning of new negroes is essentially different from those described. I would first of all prepare them for the climate, give them time to recover the fatigues of the voyage; have them carefully examined by the doctor, left for some time to his direction, and worked under his orders; indeed I could wish that the practice had more controuling power over the hospital, nurses, and diet of the sick negroes in general than they now have; for where an *overseer* has the vanity to think that he can supply the place of the doctor; the two provinces must naturally clash, and the poor negro will become the sacrifice of *his* temerity.

I now suppose a cargo of African slaves to be arrived upon a property; I would therefore have, in the first place a general dormitory prepared for their reception; it should be large, and commodious; but not exposed to the air, for negroes of all descriptions
dislike

dislike the cold; nay they will frequently sleep so near the fire, as to have their cloaths burnt, without perceiving it. Proper people should be provided to wash their cloaths, and dress their food. They should be fed, for the first twelve months at least, under the eye of the overseer; they should be worked in such a manner as to make their employment rather a pleasure than a toil; they should be generally engaged, (but not on Sundays, for that day should be always their own) in planting, cleaning and gathering provisions; they should be early taught to have some pride in, and idea of independency, that they may look forward to their own house, their own ground, and in time, their own family. They may now and then be drawn off to do slight jobs upon the estate; this will make them handy, and tempt them to form connections there; and so often as this shall happen, the idea should be encouraged; as a negro thus willingly domesticated, will probably be of more durable service than two or three removed to it at once from the ship. It seems to me indispensably necessary, that the negroes of their
own

own country should attend their wants, and that one of the same description should superintend their work. The whip should be dismissed; and sugar and water given to them when they become weary, or the sun is intensely hot. They ought not to be sent out too soon in the morning, nor continue too late in the evening, particularly in the rainy seasons; when I think that all, without exception, (more especially those who are nurses) should be much indulged. They may be employed in the work already mentioned, or in chopping pastures, cleaning young canes, dropping dung, or attending the tradesmen; and these I would recommend to be their sole employment, for at least one year, and altogether in one gang; and during which period, I would not suffer them upon any account to go into a cane piece after the trash begins to fall, as it is very apt to excoriate the skin, and leave ulcers behind, that are not easily cured by time and application. So soon as they shall know how to open and cultivate a ground, and the overseer shall be assured that they are capable, and willing to make it their future dependence,

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he should supply them with materials, and lend them assistance to build a house; should encourage them to become domestic, and should by degrees initiate them into the labours of the field; but I should not suffer them to be put into the big gang, until their growth shall be confirmed; and unless they have sufficient bodily strength to make their way good with the others. As for those, who are intended for a trade, their labour is proportionably easy; but I would, independently of their work, recommend the same treatment in every other respect, with those intended for the field; and even the house negroes should be established in their own houses, and grounds.

I think that negroes in general are a healthy set of people; and if they were more indulged than they are in sickness, their work more apportioned to their strength, their food certain, and their cloathing warm, that they would seldom trouble the hospitals with their company, or the overseer with complaints. If a good negro should not, by some accident, turn out so soon one morning as the others do, or with from slight indisposition

indisposition to lay up a few hours, or take perhaps a whole day ; I think that, in consideration of his regularity in general, it should be overlooked. It is an easy matter to discriminate between those who are deserving, and those who wish to make an excuse for idleness ; and perhaps it might be better to pass over a fault in the first, than admit of the least excuse (except in sickness) in the last. Many negroes are obliged to resume the hoe, when with proper indulgences they should seek their beds ; and if their feelings were to be more generally credited, and more forbearance shewn upon particular occasions, there would not be so many really sick, and by no means so many skulkers ; for when these poor creatures are made to turn out, when complaining, before it is morning ; and, after the fatigues of the day, are employed amidst the dews of night, or obliged at any time to work in the rain ; the consequence will be a full hospital the ensuing morning. It is surely better to obtain a proportionate quantity of labour from many hands, than to expect the same work to be done by few ; in the first place, the bu-

finess will proceed with regularity, and promise a continuance; in the second it will be overstrained; and like the bow that is too much bent, will break at last.

Negro children, as well those who are creoles, as those who are purchased, should be lodged together, and under the particular notice of the overseer; they should have proper women to attend them day and night; they should be made to move about, that they may have the use of their limbs, and kept in health, under the eye of a prudent old woman, whose sole business it should be, to make them hand-weed pastures, or to employ them in some light work in which they may take delight, and which a gang of children, if it be at all numerous, will do to the full, as well as seasoned negroes. They should not be made to depend upon their mothers for food; but should be daily supplied from the overseer's house; and he should direct them to be fed three times a day, either under his own eye, or that of a book-keeper. They should not turn out too early in the morning, nor be suffered to move out of their huts after dark: and to
speak

speaking my sentiments, I do not know any quality so good in a manager as that of taking especial care of the negro children.

It is observed, that negroes are not grateful: that those who have been the most indulged, are generally those who will be the first delinquent. It has been said, that those who have been kept under a steady discipline, have been seldom known to commit enormities, whereas those who have been treated with peculiar kindness have made wanton attacks upon the life of the master, and been the first perhaps to excite rebellion: suppose that all this be even granted, (which however in many instances I can personally deny,) yet still the feelings of the slave must be consulted, and general rigour should not be pursued in consequence of private treachery. If necessity can plead an excuse with the European settler, or the planter for the abuse of power, and reconcile the tyrant to the caprice of punishment,—the sufferer should not therefore meet with oppression when patient, nor cruelty when resigned—the situation of master and slave should be humanely considered; and as the first

first owes his bread to the latter, it is his duty from principle, as I should hope it would be from inclination, to protect him from cruelty, and preserve him from want.

The situation of a good negro under a kind owner or a benevolent overseer is not to be pitied, indeed it is very superior in many respects, (the idea of indiscriminate punishment excepted) to those of the generality of labouring poor in England—the first indeed are slaves to their masters—the last to their wants. Under the subjection of such as I have abovementioned, even the condition of a worthless one is by no means so deplorable as the humanity of Europeans seems to suspect; nor are their punishments such as to strike with horror, when we reflect upon what people of our own colour and language, our own religion and feelings, so often suffer in the persons of soldiers and sailors *. Under capricious and inhuman managers,

* I am far from presuming to throw the most distant reflection upon that discipline which is necessary to be observed in our fleets and armies; as among the liberal and enlightened, who are an honour to these professions, as much humanity is found as among any class of people existing; and if punishment

managers, who in the tyrant sink the man, their situation is, in some respects, too lamentable to be described; for as they are determined not to be pleased, they will not give their negroes a good word, grant them any indulgence, or look upon them as human creatures endued with feeling, or subject to the laws of humanity; but they will on the contrary inflict heavy punishments for the slightest omissions, be constantly upon the watch to detect petty errors, and descend to such instances of low and malignant revenge as would shock the greatest savage that ever enjoyed the sight of human blood. To wretches of this description, whose cruelty rises in proportion to the weakness of the object, no excuse should be made, no protection given; they should be deprived

ment follow delinquency, it is only under the idea of eradicating a bad example for the substitution of one that is good: but when corporal severity exceeds the crime, the end of punishment is thereby perverted, and that becomes *criminal* which before was *just*. It is the wanton abuse of power in the West Indies that alarms, and not the severity of infliction, although in some particular and private cases it may, and I doubt not has, been carried to excess: it is for this reason, that I think punishments in our colonies should be publicly inflicted, and attended with some kind of solemnity.

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of the powers of punishment, hooted through the world as dishonourers of nature ; should find no companion but shame, no rest but in death ; and this completion of human punishment should be as painful as ignominious.

The discipline of these degraded mortals should be steady, not severe, nor should they proceed from malice or resentment ; and the overseers should be particularly careful not to indulge themselves in liquor ; and should likewise reflect, that as the poor negro depends entirely upon their mercy, that in this case forgiveness becomes a victory. They should not be chastised in such a manner as to lay them up, for the end of punishment is defeated by a loss of labour ; and a long remission from employment may beget indolence, that indolence may foster other crimes, and those occasion severities which too often transcend the bounds of justice and humanity. When a negro becomes familiarized to the whip, he no longer holds it in terror* : for I have generally observed, that

* This observation may be applied to all colours and periods, and all conditions of life.

it does not correct, but multiply faults; that it often makes one who was good become bad; and that instead of succeeding as an example, it has a contrary effect, and will ultimately drive the idle to villainy, and the feeling to despair.

I would propose that no slave should receive more than the legal sufferance of nine and thirty lashes, (if the whip be thought indispensably necessary, but I would recommend the substitution of some other punishment*) unless it be in the presence of the doctor, (who

* I am sorry to observe, that punishments in Jamaica are often inflicted upon the bodies of the negroes without discretion, and very frequently rather to gratify revenge than for the sake of example. An overseer who is addicted to drink, will not make any discrimination in the absence of reason between the generally laborious, and accidentally idle; and there are drivers upon some plantations, who will sleep over the work of the negroes committed to their charge, when the white people are absent, but who will use the whip without necessity so soon as one shall appear in sight. I am willing to believe that it is sometimes meant as a warning: but why make a mocking of punishment, or suffer that to be considered as sport to an able negro, that intimidates, and consequently becomes pain to those who are sick and weakly? I am convinced that custom and bad example have a fatal influence upon the conduct of the generality of white people in Jamaica, many of whom imagine that the appearance of discipline is a spur to labour, and that negroes will

(who should be made responsible for the excesses of infliction,) and even then the extent of severity should be directed by an attending magistrate. Upon many negroes shame will operate more powerfully than the lash; and I do not see any reason why they should be mortified when they demand our pity; on the contrary—they should be encouraged to take some pride in integrity, and know how to value a confidence when reposed in them; that numbers are radically honest, and worthy of trust, I have the experience of near thirteen years to corroborate; and this position

not work unless roused by the sound of the whip: how very necessary is it then, that people of this description, and with such ideas should be shortened in authority, and that the responsibility of a plantation should be entrusted only to those who have consistency of conduct: whose education will give a pride to feeling, enforce humanity by example, and thereby make the interest of their employer the line and rule of all their actions? That there are some of the first description, who, in spite of the want of education, are sensible, industrious, and honest, I do not scruple to allow; and that I am acquainted with several of the last whom suspicion may trust, and in whom confidence repose, I have a pleasure to confess; and I must consequently observe that encouragement should follow merit without the illiberal discriminations of name or climate: for if a planter be well served, it is of little consequence whether that service be rendered by one who was born on the Southern, or Northern side of the river Tweed.

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I am convinced that many people who are acquainted with the West Indies will support; and I am moreover apt to believe, that they would not labour under that general stigma of dishonesty they now do, were they better instructed, or were they even taught the difference between a good and an evil action, and had better examples before their eyes, from which they might copy the ideas, and perfect the practice of moral rectitude.

I shall now suppose that the African, are assimilated as it were, from time, connections, and habitudes of custom, with the Creole negroes; I shall therefore, for the better elucidation of my subject, describe their general and specific labours upon a plantation, beginning with their hours of toil, and interventions of rest, and descend to their common recreations, and domestic œconomy; by which means you will be enabled to form some just ideas of the real situation of a slave; and will in consequence, I hope, believe, that it is by no means so dreadful as those, deluded, I fear by a mistaken, although a laudable motive of humanity, may be led to believe: I shall afterwards give my opinion, (which I submit with deference and

humility) how their conditions may with a proportional benefit accruing to the master, be greatly meliorated, without any local exertion, or mental suffering.

When negroes become masters of their work as much may be done by slight as labour; and a constant habitude makes that familiar, which to a looker on would be considered as a hardship under which both spirits and strength must soon succumb. They generally turn out to work at six o'clock in the morning, and continue unremittingly employed until the time of breakfast, which is generally between the hours of nine and ten. For this meal they are allowed half an hour; but three quarters or more is the general average. They then continue upon the hoe till dinner time, that is, until twelve or one o'clock; and perhaps the medium of these hours is the general time of vacancy all over the Island. Although this be called the time of refection, and is with the overseer and the white people upon the plantation that period of the day which is set aside for this particular purpose; yet in this interval the negroes seldom make a meal, but are rather inclined to indulge their leisure in conversation with their fellows,

fellows, or to loiter away the time in useless inactivity untill the shell * prepares them for a renovation of toil. They are allowed for a nominal dinner one hour and a half, but it generally arrives at, or exceeds two, before they all assemble; and if the spot upon which their labour be called, be at any distance from their houses, the time is proportionally elonged. They seldom continue in the field, out of crop, after sun-set, which is never later than seven, so that from this hour until six the ensuing morning they may call their time their own; a part of which they consume in broken sleep, the rest in supper and a preparation for breakfast at the matin summons; so that the negroes can absolutely command between thirteen and fourteen hours a day, out of crop, besides the accidental vacancies during the rainy seasons, without mental care or bodily exertion; and where is the labourer in England who can resign himself to rest, and be soothed by these reflections.

* Upon some estates the negroes are summoned to work, or to a relaxation from toil, by the blowing of a shell, and upon some by the ringing of a bell.

An European burns at the very idea of human nature toiling in the fervid regions of the torrid zone, without considering that every climate has its inhabitant, and that inhabitant its local customs and labours to endure. An African would shudder at the anticipation of being exposed to rains that freeze, and colds that numb; and the effects of the last (adverting to climates) are more sudden, and more fatal in point of sensation than those of heat: as animal warmth preserves the system in life and health; so doth a languor or fatal suppression of this principle give rise to sickness, or consign to death.

In crop time the labour of the negroes is more constant, I will not say that it is more severe. The situation of the tiers (or those who collect and bind up the canes for carriage) is that which I have been the most often led to compassionate; for as they are too weak for the labours of the big gang, one would of course imagine that they were entitled to some indulgence—on the contrary they are oftentimes kept in the field from

from morning to night * without the privilege of retiring from their work, or enjoying that interval of rest from the ardours of the mid-day sun, which other negroes expect invariably to enjoy. To oppress the weak with toil is impolitic and inhuman; but as labour in the West Indies is not always apportioned to strength, it cannot be wondered at, if exertions without power, and weakness without indulgence, so frequently fail.

To enter into a detail of the continued labour of a negro would be as tedious as to trace the exertions of a hedge-man from morning to night; the first works with vacancy, the last with thought. So soon as the day shall close, the one has not any thing to do but to prepare for supper, and for rest. An omission of his labour is not attended with a loss of bread to himself, his wife, and children; a fit of sickness is not followed by an expence, which the labour of seven days in

* Of this I have seen many instances; nay, I could mention some properties upon which the poor negroes were employed in cutting canes during the hours of common vacancy at noon; and who have been moreover obliged to labour on a Sunday. A practice as indelicate as inhuman!

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the week will not discharge; he is not deprived of sleep by the anticipation of want, nor alarmed in his dreams by the ideal summons of an attorney, nor does he dread that utmost reach of meanness and oppression, that *ne plus ultra* of vindictive justice, that confines misfortune to the horrors of a jail, and sinks the sufferer, his family, and hopes to irremediable misery, and eternal despair. Let the unfeeling, who inhumanly trifle with the wretchedness of others, but seriously reflect how soon disappointment may arrest their means, and justice vindicate the cause of innocence: of how little avail is that wealth that is accumulated by extortion, and how suddenly inflated pride, and unmerited elevation will sink into silence, and be buried with contempt! Let the wretch who fattens upon the means of others, but consider that rapacity is amenable to justice; and that he who cannot live with honour should sink with shame. The accidental sunshine of fortune is often found to be an *ignis fatuus* that leads the bewildered imagination through pleasant woods and flowery meads, that it may not be conscious of destruction,

struction, until it be plunged into the eternal abyss—the abyss that humbles pride, the retreat that strengthens suffering.

A slave, from his situation commands protection; and before he can sink his master must fall: nay, he is by law considered as a fixture, as a vegetable upon the soil, which the hand of power cannot eradicate, and which must either flourish, or wither upon the spot. The necessitous labourer in England meets with no compassion for inability, no indulgence from age, no feeling from despair: he must pay, or starve; and if he die insolvent his friends are not assured that he will find a christian burial.

The pride of freedom may here learn a lesson from the slave. I know not any situation that ought to degrade human feeling. I will not acknowledge any religion that will spurn at natural goodness; nor will I give more credit upon the score of mental rectitude to the proud in science, than the humble in ignorance. As I wish to vindicate humanity, I will defend where I can, and applaud where I ought, those unhappy creatures, who labouring under oppression

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are entitled to mercy, and as instruments of wealth deserve our gratitude.

The fellow feeling of negroes is either certainly, or apparently strong. They will attend in sickness with patience, will watch the progress of disease with concern, and feel a real, and express an honest grief at an unexpected dissolution: they will sympathise with sorrow, and pay respectful honour to the dead.

Where is the man in ten thousand who can say, that he can lay himself down to rest with a healthy body, and unruffled mind; or awake without the dread of some anticipated, and over hanging affliction? These comforts are left to those whom humanity pities, and whose situation religion condemns. As negroes are not acquainted with the horrors of anticipation, they are relieved from one of the greatest curses that human nature can experience: if punishment come, it is sudden at least, and unexpected; and the impression of sorrow wears away with that of the lash. In all countries neglect and crimes are followed by punishment: and in European governments, (so sanguine is their
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local policy,) a white man would be hanged for those offences, which negroes perpetrate every day without a chastisement, or such perhaps as is only inflicted for the most petty crimes. I do not mean to justify the practice, but ascertain the fact.

I shall now suggest my ideas respecting the means that I think may be feasilby adopted for the personal protection of negroes from insult, and for the alleviation of their general sufferings, the plans that may with time and perseverance be reduced to practice, to prevent the infliction of wanton and cruel punishment, and that may tend to the ease and comfort at least, if not contentment of their future situations. I must beg leave to observe, that a life of idleness, and general independency will entirely defeat the intended purpose. That people of all conditions should be employed, can hardly be denied. The occupations of men in general, (excepting perhaps in some arbitrary instances) are chosen, or left for others more congenial to their strength, and disposition; and the success of their labour in a great measure depends upon, or is correspondent

to, their constitutional spirits, or bodily exertions: in those of a negro, his mind is vacant; and if he be healthy and vigorous, his labour is rather an employment than a toil. I think however, where he has any predilection for a trade, or other useful employment, that it is better policy to indulge than restrain his inclination. There are but few men I should suppose, who could be so very weak as to believe, that the climate in which he is born, in which brought up, and to which from nature, and use habituated, can be at all repugnant to his state and feelings. His condition is impressed upon his birth, it accompanies him through the different stages of life, and only ends when life shall be no more. He could as soon exchange his skin as alter his situation, he is accustomed to what he feels, and the least innovation, be it even an introduction to freedom, would not compensate his removal from his native soil; his dependance upon future events, and the abdication of general protection, and certain food. Negroes are very sensibly attached to properties; they reverence a master who
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claims from inheritance; and frequently despond when (removed to other hands) they become the chattels of unwilling possession. In Russia and Poland a vassal is purchased with the soil; and although this traffic be licensed in Europe, and over a tract of land, compared to which our western islands would be a dot; yet the practice is hardly mentioned in a light to affect, or interest humanity.

If negroes be not kept in constant motion, they cannot otherwise fill up an hour of vacation, or the periods of indulgence by any mechanical, or industrious avocation of present or future avail to themselves and families; on the contrary, whether it be from a constitutional lethargy, or from a vacuity of ideas, they no sooner cease to move, than they cease to think; and four out of five would remain in a continual torpor; unless they were roused by the provocatives of thirst or hunger. Notwithstanding this disposition of natural indolence, their work should be regular, and never strained; and I am convinced that it will be better done, although perhaps not quite so soon, if they were

were not apprehensive of impending punishment.

As so great a portion of labour is lost during the rainy seasons, it is a disgrace to the foresight, and resources of the country, that some domestic manufactures are not introduced, in which the negroes might be employed in these intervals of idleness, as well for their own comfort and emolument as the benefit of their master; and the resources which I could recapitulate would be without end: but then the policy of Europe, (whether substantial or erroneous) throws a damp at once upon this suggestion, and makes that nugatory which might be efficient. Great Britain (with humility be it spoken) seems ignorant, in some respects of the real value of its western possessions: I do not mean to oppose it to the multitudinous resources, and wealth of the East: but if commerce be meant to be established in our distant settlements, upon a humane and settled basis; why justify that rigour, that oppression in Asia, which in America is so generally condemned? We execrate the Spanish nation, and the name
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of Cortez : what better title have we, in the safety of navigation, and the submission of unprotected innocence, to our eastern possessions, than what they gained by fire and sword upon the miseries of Mexico ? If Cromwell took Jamaica, and a consequent policy either destroyed or exterminated the wretched inhabitants which the Spaniards left ; is this an excuse for power, a vindication of injustice ? If Great Britain be seriously bent upon humanity, let it enlarge the scale of benevolence, and take in, so far as her influence shall extend, all colours, and all conditions of men ; and reform at home before it venture to make romantic trials of compassion abroad ! Let it look into itself, into its own internal system ! Let it look into the situation of the peasantry ; let it look into the state of the parochial, and canvass that of the extra-parochial poor ; let it look into prisons where people for misfortunes only, or the treachery and villainy of men, are confined for life. In the present appeal to humanity, let its advocates only reflect how many wretches are daily sent to bridewell and other houses of correction, by the unfeeling mandate

date of a despotic justice of the peace, where they unremittingly labour both summer and winter, under the momentary apprehensions of corporal punishment, and as they have not (at least many of them) been used to toil, the hardship is proportionably severe; and this they frequently endure for want of the comforts at least, if not the common necessities of life, which the humanity of England should have provided, and the want of which the law redressed. Who can behold the numbers of unfortunate creatures, who nightly shiver in the streets, without protection, without raiment, without food, and not conclude, that there is either an error in feeling, or a weakness in the execution of our laws; and I am apt to believe, that there are many, who daily perish, under hedges, or in paths, for want of that common sustenance, which nature provides for all; for misery, however delinquent the sufferer may be, is, in itself, entitled to compassion; and real want, however occasioned, has a right to food. Let the legislature look if there be not slaves of their own religion, and colour in England; if there be not others,

others who become willing ones by a sale of their indentures to those very people whom the European attacks with so much rancour on the score of humanity abroad. Although a creole myself, I shall hope to be excused if I vindicate the feelings of my country. Let not a planter be blamed for the act of his agent, nor that agent be censured for that barbarity which absent he could not remedy, but which present he would scorn to justify. I do not deny but there are many wanton acts of barbarity committed upon the persons of the dependent slaves, I likewise confess that they go unpunished (a reflection upon the weakness of our laws) when the perpetrator should be followed with ignominy, if not with death. The abuses in the colonies are certainly great; and if a more tender system of management were to be introduced, which certainly might for the comfort of the slave, and the advantage of the planter; it would be a precedent in the annals of England, that would be held forth as an example of virtuous emulation to succeeding ages: but let not humanity be too sanguine, be too hasty in its first attempt! Deliberation is the parent of

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success; and to be sure of worldly profit we should canvas the possibility of human means.

The subject of the slave trade involves a great variety of internal and extraneous matter, and to follow the ideas of the pending bill, the subject, I conceive, should be taken up in England, as far as relates to the safety of vessels, and the preservation of those lives which are to be adventured in this dangerous and destructive voyage. A government acquires more wealth by the salvation of lives, than by an encrease of the revenues; but if the one can be brought to assist with prudence the encrease of the other, it is productive of a double good. If eight or ten thousand seamen be annually employed in this traffic, and one fourth of them do not return to their native country, (which, if their frequent desertion from the ship, and the life of idleness and inebriety they consequently lead in the Islands be considered, is a moderate calculation) the loss to the community in the course of twenty years could hardly be recompensed by the most extensive imposts: if, on the contrary, no greater portion of lives be lost in one year than Captain Cook experienced, there

there will of course be so many seamen maintained at a *private* expence, who when necessity requires may be called into the *public* service. That in different countries different manners obtain, I am well aware; but in respect to the West Indies some reserve should certainly take place. The sudden transition of drink from beer to rum has been fatal, and will always be so, if not used with the greatest moderation, to an European. As porter is cheap, I would make it a substitution. It is true, that the latter will go farther in spirit, but the first in strength: and if it be new, it is a kind of poison: The Creole who drinks his dram, very soon becomes a martyr to the grave.

I now come to the leading principle of the pending bill, to that principle which is meant to introduce a levelling precept, to make no discrimination between colour and climate, to give to slavery the rights of freedom, to expunge oppression from the general creed, and to establish humanity upon a general scale, throughout our Western Isles. That the plan of unconditional emancipation would answer the expected purpose, I have, not only my doubts,

but my objections. The condition of negroes in their own country, whether hereditary, or accidental, must be first considered, their customs described, their maxims explained, and polity known. If we be ascertained how, as natives they live, we may be brought to conceive what, as emigrants, they endure. That they lead a life of warfare, fatigue, and blood, we are instructed by history to believe; that the prisoners who are taken in battle, if not sold, would be treated with a cruelty, at which humanity would shudder, or would suffer the forfeit of an ignominious, or painful death; the zealots of mistaken compassion will hardly deny. If therefore we can rescue them from a slavery that would be intolerable, to a life which we know by experience they can endure, or protect them from that death which would be certain, to place them in a situation that might be rendered comfortable at least, if not happy, there consequently would be much gained upon the score of humanity: but to push the idea further, and to make that problematical, which we know to be feasible, would introduce confusion, and mar at once, and for ever defeat those

those ideas of christian charity, which it is the present object of the petitions to introduce. There is no doubt that many of those unhappy creatures are deluded, or forced from their native country; and to suppose them incapable of feeling regret, or resentment at their cruel separation from the spot which gave them being, wives, children, relatives, and friends, is not only weak, but impious, and an arraignment of that equal and universal benevolence, and that steady and impartial justice, so observable in all the works of our Creator. Whether they are, or are not, endued with equal understanding, is a subject that does not apply to the present case; if their faculties be more weak, they may be strengthened by science; if their dispositions more savage, they may be softened by examples of humanity; if ignorant of the social and moral obligations of life, they may be taught the first, by indulgence, and by religion, the last. It is true that African negroes do not seem possessed of so much spirit and alacrity as the creoles are; may not this be owing to their want of that confidence which a native soil gives the last, and an ignorance of

of their customs, manners, and tongue? The degradation of their condition must very much depress the exertions of the mind; for being without the gratifications of their wishes, but subject to their fears, it is not to be wondered at if with the principle, they lose the appearance of action. Those who are inhumanly forced from real attachments in their native country, are much to be pitied, and the seducers deserve to feel the utmost weight of their resentment: Those who are sold to avoid a cruel slavery, or a painful, and lingering death at home, may consider, for what we know, their altered condition as their deliverance; and this I am apt to believe they frequently do, from that general patience and resignation, and seeming cheerfulness which is observed to prevail amongst them all when purchased.

That they leave a bad climate for one that is better, for one in which their natural wants may be as easily provided, and without that risk and labour which must attend a life of constant warfare, can hardly be denied. If they have wives, children, and connections upon the property, those attachments are encouraged and preserved from interest, that *primum mobile* of the actions of men:

men : they are not subject to the chance of war, nor does the breast of the mother beat with constant trepidation for the danger of a husband or the loss of a child ; nor is she subject to the mortification of seeing them snatched from her bosom to undergo eternal banishment, or suffer the anticipation of death. The comforts of certainty in a domestic life at least she may gain by an alteration of her state, and console herself with seeing the same protection extended to those she loves which she enjoys, and that the chances in her favour are, that they will not ever be disjoined. I firmly believe that there is not a description of people in the world, less occupied by uneasy sensations, who are more disposed to be, and who really are, more happy than the generality of negroes after the toil of the day is over, when assembled in their huts, conversing over their fires, and anticipating the pleasures of the approaching meal, (which generally consists of pottage, highly seasoned, and is such as may be considered a luxury in any climate) and of these the generality of them partake, to their utmost wish, at least

least twice a day. I do not think them a greedy people, they have no appearance of haste in eating, will chearfully let others enjoy their mess, and are fond of extending, particularly at night, the hours of refec-tion. The women in general drink nothing but water, or sugar and water as a treat—the men will almost all indiscriminately swallow drams when they can get them, and even indulge in spirit to intoxication; but yet it is not often that riots ensue, and if they do happen, they are easily quelled. They seem sensible, if it be sudden, of a small indulgence, and I think they do not abuse great ones if caution be used in the time of concession. I have known a little grog, sugar and water, an unexpected her-ring, or a piece of salt fish give them spirits for the remainder of the day, and an after-noon allowed almost transport them. They are particularly fond of tobacco, and as it chears them in their labour, and is not at-tended with bad consequences, a present of a little every now and then when they de-serve it, would be but a trifling expence to an estate. They ought not to be refused the participation

participation of harmless recreations; why not make them as contented as their situations will allow? A good-natured man not only gains by their enjoyment, but adds felicity to his own mind: where the master is determined to be easy, it is not likely that his negroes will be wretched. They should rejoice at each others happiness, and sympathise with each others misery: the first should teach the last to consider themselves as men. A good slave will be attached to a good master from principle, and where he has been entrusted with the preservation of his life, he has never, as far as I have been able to learn, been found a traitor. As confidence begets service, so should service be attended with gratitude. Make a negro estimable in his own eyes, and he will be faithful and just in yours.

A proper distinction is not made between the captain of a ship who purchases slaves in Africa, and the Guinea merchant who takes up a cargo in the West Indies. The first may inveigle, the last can only sell: the one carries, the other disposes: after the bargain is struck the captain is relieved of his

his fears ; and it is the interest of the merchant to preserve his purchase in health, and to bring it, if in condition, to an early sale. His engagement is soon compleated ; and no tax of inhumanity can lie at his door. If he deceive the purchaser he should be called to an account ; if the planter deceive him he must abide by the consequence. The man who trusts has a right to say I will be paid. That advantage should not be taken by the rich, nor insult be the language of the poor, is a *datum* which ought to be received—that misfortune may claim the indulgence of the first, and that petulance is not an apology for the last, may be determined by those who feel, and those whose tempers may resent. Service is reciprocal—the man who sells, and he who purchases should hold an equal guard. In business there should not be liberal, but specific confidence ; in the exchange of papers all connections in life should be forgotten, and all friendships sunk ; fathers and children should be suspicious, and should exact from one another the same bonds of performance as if they were perfect strangers. This precaution

caution is melancholy ; it is more melancholy that it should be deemed expedient.

Let us now suppose, for the sake of argument, and adverting to the adopted idea of humanity, that a total suppression of the slave trade, in consequence of the petitions shall ensue. What will the negroes gain ? What shall we not lose ? A restriction of our own trade will not be a restriction of that of other nations ; if we forego the commerce of Africa, will the French, the Spanish, the Dutch, the Danes take up, and pursue our notions of benevolence ? Would they be less rigorous, less cruel masters than the English ? Where their management is better, their laws more favorable to the comfort, and preservation of the slave, why not adopt them ? Why not form a code of institutes for their protection ? Before this can answer, and be attended with full, or even partial success, you must new model the manners, the tempers of the people, by whom they are governed ;* a system must

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* But as this innovation cannot be introduced under any authority, and the abuse of power restrained, or punished by any

be introduced to restrain their power, to bend them to the obedience of justice, to make them sensible that negroes are men, that their lives, their property is sacred; and that the least infringement of either, unless authorised by legal censure, or cases of necessity, will be as severely punished as the same offences would be in other countries: and that negroes might the better receive the

any legal process in our colonies, this reformation must be left for time to introduce, or the gradual cultivation of manners more profitable to the master and indulgent to the slave, to mature; and it is surely a matter of consequence to the owner of a plantation, to select a man for the importance of the trust, whose character at least may be a check upon his passions, and prompt him to consult the interest of his employer, in the preservation and safety of his slave; and I would here recommend it to the Attornies,* and to all those who, in the absence of the proprietor, have the command of these dependent creatures, to superintend, as often as possible, their labour and their wants, that they may, by these means, ingratiate themselves into their confidence, and encourage them to believe that they will be protected by their power, and relieved by their humanity; and this surely must be a desirable end to be obtained by those, to whom so many must look up for comfort and support.

* An Attorney is a man who has a delegated power to act for principals in England; but is essentially different in practice from an Attorney at law.

full

full benefit of an impartial legislation, let them be universally baptized, that they may become our equals at least in christianity. Let them be instructed, so far as they shall be capable of instruction, in the moral and obedient duties of life; let them not be too much humbled by a sense of their condition, but be taught to love their masters as protectors, and not to fear them as their tyrants. The overseers should be taught to keep up their authority, not by punishment, but by example; the negroes might then be better governed by shame, than the lash. The inferior servants upon a plantation, and the drivers should not be allowed the power of castigation. I am aware that these maxims will be thought romantic, adverting to the long accustomed mode of general management, to the habits under which the white people in the West Indies have been educated, and to the feelings and dispositions of the negroes as they now are, these maxims, if seriously adopted, would be not only romantic, but absurd. Who would think of sowing land, before it was properly prepared for the reception of seed? To force nature,
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to new mould at once the customs of life, would be more than an Herculean labour, it would be but little short of impossibility. Innovations are always dangerous; reforms (particularly in a plan of such extensive magnitude as the present) should be well matured before a single step is made towards their introduction. It should be considered whether the negroes will gain in happiness, or we a gratification to our feelings, by a hasty and indiscriminate change. The man who gives a slave unconditional liberty, bestows upon him a curse; he is thrown at once into the world, unprotected, unprovided, and must ultimately starve, or gain his bread by those means, which have brought many unhappy wretches of this description to the gallows. If a portion of land, or a house upon the property be given to him, the other negroes will not always let him work the first, nor the overseer inhabit the last; as a slave emancipated is at all times a troublesome, often times a dangerous visitor upon a plantation. If an annual stipend be allowed him, he will consume it in riot and debauchery; and not being accountable to
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any one for the regularity of his life, he will think that he has a right to follow his inclinations without controul, not considering that his conduct may bring down private revenge, or public justice.

I should think that no reflective man can justify the idea of indiscriminate liberation. The consequence of the execution would be impolitic, and cruel; would entrench upon public, and be destructive of private security. It is not so much in the West Indies as in England, that the evil will be felt, and the loss oppress. A planter who lives in the quiet possession of his property, may make it answer, if not his wishes, at least his wants: if it give him the means of comfortable subsistence, and he can make that subsistence certain, it may not be his interest, in the line of worldly enjoyments, to sacrifice his comforts to the security of him who trusts; but this being a selfish principle, is erroneous; for the creditor will ascertain his rights; and if he enforce them with feeling, with honour, and justice, some gratitude should attend his forbearance, and every nerve exerted to secure him from risk,
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and loss: but if he be rapacious, where his security should make him liberal; and inhuman, where he has occasioned distress; if he promise with a view to deceive, and insinuates that he may securely betray: I know not any disappointment, any loss, any ruin that should not be the attendant of his crimes.

That the master profits by the labour, the skill, the independency of his slave, cannot I think, be well denied; for him he plants, for him he cleans, for him improves; and the more he is encouraged to industry, the better clothed, the better fed, the more able will he be to labour; and if his work be apportioned to his strength, he may continue his exertions beyond the common period: but if negroes be over-wrought, and no indulgence given to their weakness, they soon wear away in body and mind, and absolutely bear the symptoms of age, when in point of years they are only in their prime. A proper allowance is seldom made for a diminution of strength; for if an estate were used with two hundred slaves to make the same number of hogheads; if ten or twenty of the most able were to die, the master would expect,

expect, and the overseer push to keep up the same quantity of produce. If the same work be expected to be done with a reduction of hands, the remainder must gradually fail in strength, until at last they shall be brought down so low, that the crops will fall at once, new negroes, to a considerable amount must be purchased; they must be seasoned, they must be settled; and let them turn out ever so well, it must require many years of steady, and successful management to bring up the property to its former produce.

No man, who is acquainted with the West Indies, can suppose it possible that the average upon estates in the islands, can preserve a given number of negroes, without the aid of foreign purchase.* Some plantations bury more than others; and it is natural

* If properties in the West Indies were only to be considered as nurseries for the preservation of the human species, and the occupations of the negroes were to be conformable to this intention; there is little doubt but the capital of slaves might be augmented upon every plantation; but it does not follow, that a life of idleness, is a life of policy, or that the negroes would be more happy (they certainly would be less useful) under indolence than toil.

to suppose, that where the labour is disproportionate, *there* will be the greatest mortality. Under the *present* system of general management, I am apt to believe that, if the introduction of African slaves were inhibited, in twenty years one third of the number would be diminished; in thirty, more than one half; and in fifty, the whole race very nearly extinct. As humanity should rather wish to relieve than oppress labour, and save, than be the means of extinguishing life, a recruit from other countries, (if treated with proper tenderness,) would rather be a subject of benevolence, than the traffic of oppression.

If planters would be contented to make only half the quantity of produce, they in a common year, now do, their capital of negroes would be better preserved, and upon some properties, upon pens in particular, (upon which sugar is not made) the number may be certainly kept up, if not encreased: but then the situation must be healthy, and provisions abundant. The principal occasion of a planter's distress, is the improvident purchase of slaves; therefore he, who by a steady attention, proper indulgence, and tenderness,

derness, in sickness, can preserve his capital unbroken, will at the end of twenty years be more rich than he who makes a larger proportion of produce, but is frequently obliged, by a want of these essentials, to have recourse to foreign purchase. I am aware that some may insinuate this idea, will not the difference between one hundred and fifty hogheads and one hundred, furnish sufficient means to keep up a full complement? a full complement of negroes it certainly may, but will those purchased be so valuable, be so good, or durable, as those who were formerly able, but who have now failed through excess of labour? A creole well established in family, house, and ground, is in my opinion, (which opinion I found upon my own personal experience) worth more than any three imported from the coast. If it be thought possible, that the colonies can supply themselves without any foreign assistance; a suspension of this trade, for a few years, might with certainty determine. But suppose that the English should forego this commerce, would not other nations smuggle them into the country, and to illegality

superadd extortion, to the ruin of him who shall be tempted to buy? will it not deprive us of this valuable trade without adding to humanity, and make the labour of those, who are now upon the plantations more heavy, and at last sink them down to languor and despair? would not a hasty liberation break down the bounds of justice, and obedience, introduce anarchy, confusion, licentiousness and death? As no subordination could be preserved in such a state, the negroes might unbridle revenge, and make an indiscriminate slaughter of the Europeans, and offer men, women, and children as the first victims of liberty: they would next proceed, in the pride of irresistence, to the destruction of the buildings, crops, and provisions; live in a state of constant hostility, destroy one another, and perish themselves at last, by famine, or disease; or would be swept away by other nations, who would enrich themselves with our capitals, rise on the ruin of our trade, take advantage of our loss; and grow insolent, oppress, or perhaps conquer us with our own wealth. Nay this is not all; new taxes must be raised to
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supply the deficiencies of our revenues, and millions upon millions added to the public weight, under the pressure of which so many individuals are already to sink; and a surcrease of which, perhaps many of those, whose zeal is foremost in the cause of humanity, may think it impossible to bear.

The numbers of men, who through intemperance, neglect, and other causes, have been lost in this commerce should be duly considered; and if the community suffer more by endemial calamity, than it can gain by foreign resource, the folly of adventure is apparent: but if trade can be extended with a preservation of souls, and a provision of seamen, it must greatly favour our insular means, and every vessel would be considered as the head of a common-wealth, that raises annually so many patriots to the state. I will not dwell upon the numbers, that may be annually lost upon the Eastern or Western adventures, but only submit, whether they would not have been more useful members if they had settled at home, and cultivated tracts of land, that before were barren, had given population to deserts, industry to idleness,

ness, health to languor, and vigour to want. Whether one man at home, be not worth more than three abroad; and whether the time that is lost in one month, often might not have been filled up by employments, that would have subsisted four times the number of individuals, is likewise a question to be asked. The East, the West Indies, and Africa have been the grave of Europeans. The marrow of England has been melted down in the unhealthy regions of the torrid zone: some may have escaped the partial dissolution, but the proportion is so very small, that these emigrations may be considered as the general forerunners of destruction. If an estimate were to be made of all the lives that have been lost by navigation in the course of ten years, the amount would be so enormous, that people would turn from the account with horror; and in the spirit of humanity, or anticipation of future loss, be inclined to sacrifice interest to support our population. If the profits of trade be opposed by its losses, the adventurers would perhaps find that the innumerable cargoes that have been swallowed up
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by the sea, would startle the ignorant, and surprize the calculator. One misfortune, like that of the Halfewell (and that there are numbers with equal concomitants of horror can hardly be doubted) will add more pangs to feeling, than the safety of many voyages will give happiness to wealth.

We will now suppose, that it shall be thought more political to push our distant possessions, than to strengthen our domestic means; but how can this be effected, if our powers are not equal to our objects, and the assistance of foreign purchase be discouraged, or forbidden? If we could form a body of laws, by a strict adherence to which the negroes who shall be removed from a worse slavery than they will experience in our colonies, or from that death, which in Africa would be probable, if not certain, to our islands, where they would not have that death to fear, the more will it enlarge the scale of benevolence; and found a system besides of policy upon that of humanity.*

* I am aware that this idea has too often occurred, but as I wish, for the sake of humanity, that it should be particularly enforced, I hope the intention may be an excuse for the repetition.

Of our Eastern resources I am an utter stranger; of those of Jamaica I can speak with confidence. Though sugar and rum be the staples of the country, yet the cane is not successfully cultivated in every soil, and as it is the most expensive, so is it the most uncertain production of the climate. The accidents to which it is subject from a violence of seasons, a contention of the elements, accidents of fire, the trespass of cattle, and imprudence of management, are such, one would think, as would discourage the planter from its future culture; and yet for this plant the land is forced, is often impoverished, and at last made desert.

Although not one tenth part of this valuable and beautiful island be under a state of cultivation; yet is there not a single spot that is not, or may not be, applied to some use. Where canes do not thrive, the guinea, (an artificial grass) will grow, and even among rocks, where a particle of mould is hardly seen; nay such situations will likewise produce cotton, ginger, pimento, and wood of the most valuable dyes; or the most durable for building. Rice will flourish in
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the swamps, indigo in drier land, corn, if the spot be manured, upon every soil, and every where, if it be new; provisions in the most lofty mountains, and natural herbage where these shall fail. These various resources might, if properly directed, and prudently extended, very considerably augment the public revenues, and thereby help to ease those taxes, which at present press so heavily upon all ranks and conditions of men. If I have proposed an hypothesis which I have not knowledge to maintain, I shall hope the intention may justify the fault, and that I may not be censured for wishing well, although I have not talents to render service.

In the course of these remarks I have dropt a hint respecting baptism; and I shall now give my reasons why, I think it may not only be productive of a change of moral sentiment in the unenlightened slaves, but tend to the decency of their lives, the health of their bodies, and the comfort of their minds; and shall afterwards give my opinion how their situations may, with an encreasing degree of advantage to the master, be much improved.

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It is notorious that more slaves are ruined in principle and health, at those dances which are allowed at the burials of their dead, than by any other intercourse or occupation whatever. At the funeral of a christian slave, none of these scenes of tumult and intemperance would be allowed; the service would be read with decency over the grave (and to enhance the respect and solemnity) the white people upon the plantation should attend, to enforce example, and to see that the attendants retire in peace and order to their respective houses. This custom, by a mild and decent introduction of the forms of our religion, might soon become, not only universal, but be the pledge of future security; but with this introduction, the doctrine of Christian kindness and forgiveness should be reduced to practice; the cloud of darkness that now covers the minds of the negroes should be gently removed, that their understandings might be prepared to receive the new instruction, that they might feel comfort from obedience, and protection from power. As the slaves in the French islands, coming from the same coast, with the same ignorance, the same prejudices, and the same fears,

fears, are universally baptized,* and treated as Christians; are instructed in, and obtain a decent knowledge of religious observances, are consequently more obedient, more quiet, more attached, and more happy, than ours; why should not the same practice upon the same colour be introduced, encouraged, and supported in our islands? Many indulgences, many recreations may be safely allowed them; but their amusements should be made to receive a new turn; they might be more frequent, but not so long protracted, and should terminate at such an hour, that they might have full time for their domestic occupations and rest, and be able, without fatigue, or regret, to renew their daily toil. If every Saturday were indiscriminately given to them, either to work in their grounds, or look for provisions, that Sunday might be a day of rest and instruction; I am apt to believe that the planter would ultimately, with more certainty preserve his capital, and

* This observation I cannot support from personal experience, not having been in any of the French islands, nor perused their Code Noire; but the practice of baptism, I have been told, is general in their colonies.

be ascertained of more punctual, and efficient work.

The most delicate part of the subject is now to canvas ; I should shrink at the idea of a justification of slavery ; did I not, even in that slavery, behold comforts, of which liberty is frequently deprived. A slave has no feeling beyond the present hour, no anticipation of what may come, no dejection at what may ensue : these privileges of feeling are reserved for the enlightened, whose fears may dread misfortunes that cannot arrive, and despise distress which they know *must* come. As the sufferings of the mind are infinitely more acute than bodily sensations ; in the reverse proportion, is the slave more happy in ignorance, than those of an opposite colour are in science.

That negroes are capable of bodily influence and mental cultivation, who can be so impious as to deny ? The sun that shines on all, enlightens them : and if genius be the consequence of heat, and the beams that fertilize the earth, irradiate the mind ; the African in geniality of climate, and warmth of soul would blaze ; when the inhabitants
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of Europe would freeze. I have known instances of attachment in a negro, that would shake the courage of an European; a faithful slave will oppose his breast to the knife that is intended to wound his master; he will risk that life without ostentation, he will receive his death without a groan.

That negroes have not any specific ideas of moral rectitude, is not a fault of principle, but education. If good examples were held forth for imitation, they would adopt them; if bad be relevant it is their misfortune, and not their fault. If they be not instructed to think, to act like men, it is a present disgrace, as it may be a future misfortune, to those who hold them as dependants. That they may be taught to believe, to act as Christians it would be almost impiety to deny. The power that gave them being, gave them sense. Though their colour may be a shade to their actions, yet let us consider, who are of a different complexion, that the flower that follows the sun, is not so much cherished as the humble violet that perfumes in the glade.

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We should not imagine that negroes are of a different species from ourselves, or that they are more inert in mental sensations, or less vigorous in bodily pursuits, than the natives are of other climates. It is not in the American colonies that we are to look for their exertions ; we should trace them in their wilds, the interminable forests of Africa : we should behold them in their native woods, their deserts, and their waters ; we should follow them in the chase of the lion, the tyger, and the crocodile, in fatigue that would melt down an European constitution ; in danger that would appal courage, and even add horror to despair : we should examine them in the patience of expectation, the cunning of surprize, the ardour of pursuit, the vigour of attack, the spirit of defence, or the exultation of conquest, to form an idea of their local manners, their courage, or their powers. How tame to them would appear our boasted diversions of a timid hare, that implores as it runs, and in a voice resembling that, in which our first wants and pains are known, and which is too importunate not to interest those who hear, but to which
inhumanity

inhumanity in the heat of exercise disdains to listen ; in the chase of the stag that weeps (another emblem of our condition) as it flies : and lastly in that of the fox, whose cunning, and habits of mischief have caused its persecutions in some places, and its preservation in others ; but which in itself is unworthy of the dignity of pursuit. We must look for the African in a wild state ; the European in a civilized one ; the last may be the most useful in the supply of those wants imagination has made ; the first more independent, as not having those wants to gratify. Which of the two is the most happy, the one that always craves, without the accomplishment of its wishes, or the one that is satisfied, without having its appetites to reform, I leave to those, who are fond of speculation to determine.

That negroes are cruel to one another cannot be denied ; they will assassinate without compunction, and feel not the least repentance at the perpetration of the most atrocious crimes. I have observed that new negroes are particularly fond of power, and will exert it as if accustomed to severity ; and when raised

raised to the authority of drivers upon a plantation, will be more despotic and inhuman than the creoles are.

That new negroes, although they seem to be cheerful upon their arrival in the colonies, are apparently heavy in body and mind, is an observation that cannot be easily refuted.* That they have not the least idea of personal delicacy, or shame, when that want of delicacy is exposed, is too obvious to require an argument. The creoles are not from nature, but example, somewhat more decent, and a further refinement

* The African negroes when first imported seem not to have any moral feelings, the tenderness of sentiment, or weight of thought. They are unfeeling in the plenitude of power, and savage in the cold revenge of spilling blood. They look upon sudden or violent death in others with apathy, and will bear the approaches of their own, not only without dread, but with indifference. It is amazing to see how little they interest themselves in the common occurrences of life, they do not foresee the want of means, are careless of what may happen, and thoughtless of what they have; in short their characters for many years after their arrival can hardly be defined by the most perspicuous eye of those by whom they are governed, so that for what we know they may be happy when silent, or dangerous when sullen. The characters of creole negroes are widely different, and in many instances may serve as a faithful contrast.

in practical manners, might be taught, and established by custom. If overseers were better instructed than they generally are; and would address the negroes with propriety of language, and treat them as human creatures, not as brutes, their commands would be more chearfully, and better performed. If the worst of treatment cannot render them vindictive, * how docile might they be made by gentle conduct?

I am aware that creoles are often taxed with inhumanity, as if they alone were the instruments of oppression. The conduct of a plantation is left to the overseer, and in his absence to the book-keepers † under him; and as they have the command and direction of

* Although negroes of a particular country, such as the Coromantees, may harbour a fullen, and perhaps a dangerous disposition upon their first removal from the ship to a plantation, yet their spirit is soon broken, and they bend to obedience without any seeming resentment in their minds.

† Book-keepers are in subordinate command to the Overseers, they attend the still-houses in crop, and out of crop, the the field. There are many so little deserving the name they bear, that so far from being able to calculate accounts they cannot many of them even read: and yet from this situation, from being frequently indented servants they become overseers, and have the conduct of a plantation.

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the negroes work, and as with them lies the power, and presumption of punishment, to their inhumanity alone must its excess be, in every case, attributed. If the proprietor wish to screen his own property from bodily suffering, and recommend an imploring negro as an object of forgiveness to him who is invested with authority, it is ten to one but the poor creature receive a double punishment for having dared to complain to him who had a right to redress; and for supposing that a master should presume to controul the wanton abuses of a servant.

That negroes are capricious the recurrence of every day will evince. Give them a house ready built, they will not inhabit it—a ground ready cleared, they will not work it—if you study their convenience, their ease, and happiness, they will be discontented—they must have every thing their own way; and would sooner complain of a good overseer, than not covet an exchange by the risk of one who is bad. That there are of both in this profession, it is hardly necessary to form a doubt. That many of this class have seen better days; and are to this, as they would be to any other vocation

cation both a credit, and an ornament, I can with confidence affirm; and it has frequently hurt me to see some of this description sustain a subordinate character in the drama of life, when their pretensions and abilities would enable them to move in the sphere of independency, wealth and command.

The first business of an indulgent overseer should be to secure the negroes property committed to his charge. His wife, his house, his stock, * his ground should be always sacred. No power should be used to force, no temptation put in practice to seduce the person of the first—his hut should be his castle, and the ground upon which it stands his fee. A plague is not so destructive upon a property as the removal of negroes from their accustomed grounds, from those grounds that have been delivered down from father to son: when this happens, which is the height of present imprudence, and consequent distress, they pine away in secret, neglect the cultivation of new lands, and pinched by hunger,

* Most negroes in Jamaica have either fowls, hogs, or cattle; some have all; and some, though slaves themselves, have likewise slaves of their own.

and unable to work, the consequence will be, declining health, a broken spirit, and an early end. *

There is no country in which either a negligent, or capricious management, an imprudent change, or a relaxation of discipline are attended with more certain expence, or ruinous consequence than in the Island of Jamaica. Negroes should be directed by a steady hand; and a regular system should be observed upon a plantation. If they are to receive the benefits of religion, why not the privileges of society? if they are to be instructed in morals, let them profit from their introduction; and let them leave by will the little property their labour or their prudence has amassed.

I know not any thing in the West Indies so shocking to humanity, and so disgusting to individuals, as the savage and indecent manner in which the trial of slaves is conducted. Some tenderness at least, if not dignity of conduct, should be observed in the arraignment of a man who stands a prisoner,

* Of this species of mismanagement I have been unfortunately a witness myself, and can therefore speak of its effects with confidence.

at any tribunal, for crimes that may affect his character, or life : but where the delinquent does not observe a solemnity in the judge, he loses a respect for his office ; and hears the sentence that consigns him to the grave without horror, without shame. Two magistrates, and three free-holders, from whose decision there lies not an appeal, can sentence to death. This custom should be abolished—they should be tried by the same laws, the same judges, the same jury, as ourselves ; and the Godlike privilege of majesty to respite, or forgive a slave, as well as the delinquent who is free, should be transmitted, with double recommendations of mercy, to his representatives in the Island ; that the poor negro may go with confidence to his trial, be assured that the fountain of law is his protector ; and that compassion will be the minister of death.*

Those who are so laudably anxious for the cultivation of the negroes minds, and so desirous that they should be instructed in the

* A negro is often condemned in one hour, and receives execution in the next.

doctrines of the christian religion, should consider that in their own country this promise of salvation cannot be administered: a removal therefore from their natural soil is the only chance they have that the curse of ignorance shall be converted into a blessing: so that in fact, the abolition of the slave trade will counteract the very system of humanity, and the dissemination of that mental comfort, which religion can alone ensure: for I have never known an African negro express the least reverence by sign or word for a superintending Providence; nor have I ever heard one intimate a hope, (as is the common opinion) that he shall pass after death from a life of slavery to one of ease and happiness in his native country.

To further the cause of humanity, no jobber should be allowed to purchase a *slave*, without it could be proved, that he had provisions enough at command to subsist him, at least twelve months, and so on in the regular proportions of the numbers that he may be tempted to buy; after this period, if he take kindly to his ground, he may be enabled in some measure to provide for himself,

self. Almost every man in Jamaica, let his means be ever so many, his strength of negroes ever so great, or his situation ever so dependent, is still anxious to call in the aid of hired labour; but the falacy of this management may be easily detected; for if a planter cannot make fifteen pence a day for a *seasoned* negro, who is worth a hundred pounds, how can he afford to pay fifteen pence a day for the labour of a *new* negro, who is not worth forty? besides, a jobber is generally paid for his work soon after it is done, and does not run any risk, except in a delay of payment, if storms should intervene; whereas a planter must wait the slow progress of returning *seasons* for emolument, and lose his labour if these should fail.

Every negro who is given to run away, to steal, eat dirt, (which singular affection proceeds from a depravity of appetite, or want of food, and which is incorrigible) or those who require constant punishments for idleness, or other crimes, should be transported from the country; a practice however, which is seldom adopted, excepting by the independent and affluent owner; and which
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perhaps favours rather more of policy than kindness; if however it should be the means of enforcing example, and deterring from crimes, it will have some, and perhaps no inconsiderable effect, in the community of slaves.

At the time that the trial of Somerfet was determined at Westminster-hall, a negro very shrewdly remarked, that Lord Mansfield had told them they were free, but did not tell them where to get food.—It is of little consequence to give liberty, if protection be not likewise extended to those who are become the legal objects of freedom. Since that decision, what numbers of poor neglected negroes are constantly seen lamenting in the streets, and unfeelingly driven from place to place by parish officers, and who become pick-pockets, thieves, or murderers in consequence of emancipation—for who will take these degraded creatures into service, without any recommendation but that of poverty; and that of private, and public dereliction? A liberated slave in Jamaica (were the practice frequent) would be almost in the same condition; he would
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be thrown out of house, ground, and personal protection; and the gallows might at last end his dreams of liberty.

In treating of the present subjects it should be considered whether the fluctuation of popular opinion should not be fixed by the standard of common experience—whether ideal humanity should not bend to political reason; or whether European speculation should triumph over American safety. The very endeavour would excite confusion, without encreasing benevolence, and establish perhaps a permanent slavery, in the stead of promoting an expected comfort. It may not only convulse the colonies, but shake their interests to the very centre; and overthrow the foundations of Western wealth, and its consequential resources for ever. If negroes can be admitted to a partial freedom, the protection of laws, and blessings of religion, it is as much perhaps as they ought to experience, and more I fear, than would make them happy; for to have that of which we cannot make a use, will be, not an enjoyment, but a burthen.

To conclude—the observations I have made are to the best of my knowledge sincere. I have not ranged over a romantic field of fiction to bewilder the imagination, and to puzzle truth. As I have not been able to shower roses, I have wished to pluck the thorn from the foot of him who feels. I have not wished to make any discrimination of climate, colour, chance, or feeling. My imagination, however feeble it may be, has considered the world as a garden, in which flowers of various shapes, of various colours, expand, decline, and fade. Some if fostered will grow to beauty; and some if trodden upon will rise no more. I could here apply the moral to the present subject; but that subject, and my task it is now time that I should conclude. I shall therefore in my conclusion acknowledge that I am an advocate for humanity, and that in consequence of this principle, I am not an advocate for the liberation of the slave. I am an advocate for all that can make him comfortable, I am an advocate for all that can make him happy; I am an advocate for his removal from his natal soil, that he may taste the comforts of protection,
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the fruits of humanity, and the blessings of religion. I could wish that no difference but that of colour, (which nature has made) should contrast the feelings of the African dependent and that of the European master: I could wish that the national weakness of the first should be supported by the power of the last, that he should be employed as a servant, but considered as a man. I could wish that the line of benevolence should be extended, and cut a ray of light through the habitable globe, that it should warm all countries, and fertilize the coldest soil—that, like the sun, it should vivify all nature, dry up every tear, and make no distinction of manners, or complexion. Let the slave have freedom of will; let him be taught to reverence God; and then his duty to his master may be made efficient—his labour easy—his life comfortable, and his end resigned.

F I N I S.

FLEET,
Feb. 26th, 1788.

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